

MFC STATE SAFETY COUNCIL MEETING

JANUARY 22, 2004
301 North Lamar Street
Jackson, MS

Members Present: Ken Frazier, Bob Ponder, Jim Sledge, Andy Taylor, Steve Williams, Doug VanDevander, Greg Chatham, Richard Tice, Bill Kitchings

Members Absent: Jim Edwards, Greg Bourque

Visitors: Bill Lambert

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Tice at 10:35 a.m.. There being no written minutes from the previous meeting of 8/1/04, Tice and others read from their notes to recall the topics of discussion.

Old Business:

ATV / Burning Operations - A memo from the State Forester written and distributed on August 26 as a result of the August 1st meeting was circulated and discussed. At that time, careful use of ATV mounted torches was allowed. Using handheld torches from ATVs was strictly prohibited. Proper PPE was also reinforced. Since then, as a result of incidents across the country involving ATVs with mounted torches, a moratorium has been put on the use of such torches. The State Forester has also instructed that the MFC will not build any torches and ones already in service should be destroyed. The NWCG Technology and Development Center is currently working with prescribed burners from across United States (including MS) to develop some additional safety features and operating standards. Once these have been established, the MFC will reconsider the use of such equipment.

Hardhat Safety Incentive Program - Taylor reminded everyone of the program that was established in 1995 regarding the various colored hardhats indicating length of service without a preventable accident. He mentioned some instances where this is not being followed and asked the Council if they thought it should continue. The Council unanimously said that it should continue and that a reminder needed to be distributed (see attached memo dated 2/5/04).

First Aid Kits - Taylor reminded everyone that the new transport trucks will not come with first aid kits as in the past. Drivers will need to transfer the kits from the trucks they are turning in into the new trucks when they arrive. The new trucks are supposed to have fire extinguishers when they arrive, and the new dozers are supposed to arrive with both first aid kits and fire extinguishers.

Driving - Frazier and Sledge mentioned we continue to get reports from concerned citizens about hazardous or inconsiderate drivers in MFC vehicles. Remember when you are driving a state-owned and marked vehicle, you are driving a billboard down the road. For a lot of people, that is the only contact they have with the MFC - make a good impression.

New Business:

The following recommendations were made by VanDevander on behalf of the Northeast District Safety Council:

1. Consider issuing stickers to be placed on MFC trucks stating, "Fire Extinguisher Inside". Fire Extinguishers should also be mounted where the driver can reach it in a hurry. The NED recently had a truck catch fire that brought that to their attention.
2. We need to re-check the heights of our truck/tractor units and the clearances under our underpasses. The new units seem taller than the previous ones. Taylor has sent out new stickers and a reminder for "Know Your Limits."
3. Strobe Lights are still a good idea and recommended for cases where you have to unload near the side of the road. Sledge stated that the information has been distributed and it is a budgetary choice for each District. The Council reinforced the recommendation within budget constraints.
4. When towing the large trailer-style tree planters, that trucks smaller than one-ton should not be used due to the weight of the machine and stopping/steering ability.

The following issues were raised by various members:

1. Are Nomex Coveralls available/allowed? Yes - District Foresters have authority to purchase any PPE that is needed. Several sources are available. Contact Ponder for help if you need it.
2. Is it possible to get battery chargers that can be plugged into power-point in trucks? Yes, District Foresters can purchase at their own discretion and installation (if needed) should only be done by MFC Communications Technicians.
3. What are the plans for training regarding the new trucks and tractors? Maintenance training will be coordinated state-wide at EMS. Empire Truck will provide the truck training, Great Southern Tractor will provide the tractor training. Operator training will also be provided for each District from the same sources. District Protection Foresters should schedule individually.
4. Are Back-up beepers standard equipment? Yes, they have been part of the specifications for new dozers for the past few purchases. They are now also specified for the new trucks.

5. Tice mentioned concern about having fewer personnel to fight fire than ever before. We will need to make sure training is timely and that safety is a priority. We also need contingency plans for shifting resources between districts as needed.
6. Tice also mentioned that his district has been focusing on fire shelter re-certification and defensive driver training. Free Defensive Driver Training as available through the Tort Claims Board. Contact Taylor for more information.
7. The newly re-designed fire shelters were asked about. They are significantly larger and more expensive (about 4X \$) than the ones currently in use. The current fire shelters are still approved for use by the NWCG, so we will continue to use them for now. As money becomes available, we will eventually replace the older style with the newer style as needed.

Mr. Sledge brought up the subject of large enclosures for exotic animals and how this relates to fire suppression tactics and safety. The following points were discussed by the group:

- ~ The barrier created by such large fenced-in areas presents some challenges for suppression crews regarding firelane placement.
- ~ The type of animal inside the enclosure could present a safety hazard for crews. These are also typically in remote areas. Night time encounters are especially hazardous.
- ~ The cutting or taking down of such fences could present liability problems if a dangerous and or exotic animal escapes.
- ~ We really have little information about where these are located, who owns them and what's in them.
- ~ Owners should be encouraged to maintain adequate firelanes inside the perimeter of large enclosures.
- ~ Owners should be encouraged to post signs indicating what is behind such enclosures.
- ~ The MDWF&P is trying to register owners of large enclosures. The MFC is working with them. Information needs to flow in both directions about what is out there.
- ~ Eventually, a database could be maintained and dispatch could warn crews en route to fires of known enclosures.

Accident summaries for FY 2004 to date were discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: 10:30 a.m. , April 8, 2004 @ EMS